

**DISEASES OF THE BREAST**—C. D. Haagensen, M.D., Professor of Clinical Surgery, The College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University. W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia, 1956. 751 pages, 404 figures and 25 charts, \$16.00.

This handsome textbook is an exhaustive review of the anatomy, physiology, physical examination and diseases of the breast based on the long experience of the author and of the accumulated data at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York during the interval 1915 to 1955. The book will be of considerable value to those who have a special interest in diseases of the breast because of the wealth of statistical data which is included and the thoroughness with which the literature has been reviewed, resulting in a bibliography which has not been equaled in any recent textbook. Chapters of particular value to those who are interested in highly detailed knowledge of the breast are those sections of the book which deal with the more esoteric diseases of the breast. There are also admirable chapters on the natural history of breast carcinoma, as well as a good discussion of special pathological forms of carcinoma of the breast.

Unfortunately the reviewer cannot recommend the text either for use by medical students or for those who have something less than a professional obsession with the subject of carcinoma of the breast. A textbook of 751 pages on diseases of the breast is obviously too prolix for general use. In addition, in spite of his wide knowledge of the natural history of carcinoma of the breast, the author has developed some obsessive convictions concerning the management of mammary carcinoma which are in sharp contrast to the teaching and practice in most medical centers. Doctor Haagensen is now advocating still further restrictions in his definition of operability, in an unrealistic attempt to limit radical mastectomy to those women who are genuinely curable. In addition to the rather exacting criteria previously published by Haagensen and Stout, the author is now doing a "triple biopsy" as a preoperative measure, obtaining nodes from the supraclavicular area, internal mammary chain and the apex of the axilla. If any of the nodes so obtained show metastasis the patient is considered inoperable. Although the author is extremely concerned about a delicate approach to the tumor of the breast which may be cancer, and is severe in his criticism of needle biopsy, he seems to disregard entirely these admonitions when he invades the operative field in the axillary apex and disrupts lymphatics in the internal mammary chain. It also seems obvious that such a progressive contraction of the indications for radical mastectomy will deny the palliative benefits of the operation for many women, even though they succumb in later years to the disease after remote metastasis becomes evident.

The author also continues to insist upon the alleged value of extremely thin skin flaps far beyond the site of the primary lesion, of the necessity of routine skin grafting and his belief that the operative time is a measure of the excellence of the procedure. The fact that Haagensen himself reports an incidence of local recurrence of 12 per cent following radical mastectomy seems to refute effectively the technical considerations which he so enthusiastically advocates.

\* \* \*

**PHYSICAL DIAGNOSIS**—Fifth Edition—Ralph H. Major, M.D., Professor of Medicine and of the History of Medicine and Mahlon H. Delp, M.D., Professor of Medicine; both from the University of Kansas. W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia, 1956. 358 pages, 536 figures, \$7.00.

This has been a successful text for teaching physical diagnosis to beginning medical students since the first edition appeared in 1937, and it will serve that purpose very well for quite a few years to come. The authors emphasize the importance of many things which are too infrequently emphasized. For instance, in their chapter on General Inspection,

page 31, one finds "It is important that the patient be comfortable, but is equally important that the examiner be in a comfortable position." The chapter on Pain is selectively done and necessarily incomplete. One can wonder at its inclusion in a text devoted solely to physical diagnosis but one then realizes that the authors are attempting to include information on history as well as examination.

The reviewer objects to the term "vital signs" for the weight, height, temperature, pulse, respiration and blood pressure. He feels that these should be labeled simply as a part of the general examination and that they are no more "vital" than any of a dozen other signs.

As much as any text book we know, this book may be termed a "period piece," evocative of the good old days before scientific medicine began to displace the entertaining anecdotal literature that was the vogue in all good medical text books. It contains many clichés, anecdotes, epigrams. Above all its tone is set by its 500 odd illustrations packed into 328 pages. Here one may see a wide variety of pictures old and new—historical horror shots, ulcers and tumors, deformities of all kinds and exaggerations of disease conditions. Such a book is not often exhaustive but is more interesting than most. And, as such, it may be recommended for the teaching of physical diagnosis.

\* \* \*

**EPILEPSY AND THE LAW—A Proposal for Legal Reform in the Light of Medical Progress**—Roscoe L. Barrow, Dean, University of Cincinnati College of Law, and Howard D. Fabing, M.D., Chairman, Legislation Committee, American League Against Epilepsy, Past-President, American Academy of Neurology. Hoeber-Harper, Paul B. Hoeber, Inc., 48 East 33rd St., New York 16, N. Y., 1956. 177 pages, \$5.50.

The avowed purpose of this book is a partisan one to secure repeal of legislation unfavorable to the epileptic. As would be expected with such an approach, both sides of the question are not adequately represented. I am sure it will appeal to anyone in whose family there is an epileptic patient. There can be no doubt that some laws requiring sterilization of epileptics and prohibiting their marriages are obsolete and not based on sound clinical concepts. The criticism that the required reporting of epileptics to the Motor Vehicle Department drives epilepsy underground is well taken. It is not quite clear, however, how people with frequent seizures could be kept off the roads were this not required. The problem of the epileptic in industry is well presented with some practical suggestions as to limited liability of the employer which might well be put into effect. The book serves a useful purpose in providing factual data albeit somewhat biased in presentation for those interested in securing more favorable legislation for the epileptic. Certainly any move to take from the books laws which are outmoded and which are undoubtedly not enforced is a step in the right direction.

\* \* \*

**STUDIES IN TOPECTOMY**—Edited by Nolan D. C. Lewis, M.D., Carney Landis, Ph.D., D.Sc., and H. E. King, Ph.D. Grune and Stratton, New York, 1956. 248 pages, \$6.75.

The contents of this monograph which deals with the effects of the loss of various portions of frontal brain on behavior and bodily function in human beings consists of a series of studies constituting the report of the activities of the New York State Associates in Brain Research between June 1948 and April 1949. The material is treated from the standpoint of the surgical technique, neurophysiological studies, and psychological effects. With the waning popularity of psychosurgery, it is unlikely that in the future such a considerable amount of material will again be available for study, and thus this monograph has great value for the psychiatrist and the psychologist as well as for the neurophysiologist.